



## INFORMATION SHEET

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**NO. FS-13**

**DATE** : April 9, 2024

**CATAGORY** : Fire Safety

**TITLE** : Building and Fire Requirements for Residential Subdivisions

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**PURPOSE** : The purpose of this Information Sheet is to outline pertinent and objective considerations contained in the current version of the California Building Code (CBC) and the California Fire Code (CFC) for those seeking to subdivide their existing residential, single family-zoned lot under Government Code 65852.21.

**REFERENCES** : San Francisco Building Code, Current Edition  
California Building Code, Current Edition  
San Francisco Existing Building Code, Current Edition  
California Existing Building Code, Current Edition  
San Francisco Fire Code, Current Edition  
California Fire Code, Current Edition  
San Francisco Subdivision Code, Current Edition  
San Francisco Subdivision Code, Current Edition, Article 5, Section 1335  
San Francisco Planning Code, Current Edition  
San Francisco Planning Code, Current Edition, Article 1.2, Section 121

**DISCUSSION** :

Proposed lot lines shall not create a non-code-compliant condition. Parcel and subdivision maps shall be conditionally approved when existing buildings require modifications or demolitions to mitigate code non-compliance. Such conditional approvals are subject to the issuance of a Certificate of Final Completion and Occupancy of the required modifications or demolitions. Fire Separation Distance, as defined in the Building Code, is a critical consideration in determining wall and opening protection of a building. Therefore, architectural building plans are required on subdivision maps when property lines are proposed between buildings. These architectural building plans are necessary to determine fire resistance ratings, allowable wall openings, emergency escape/rescue, egress to public way and the architectural/structural independence of buildings. Separate demolition permits are required for each existing building to be demolished.

1. New residential buildings shall have sites that include not less than a 5-foot clear width access pathway, open to the sky, from the public way to any building and emergency escape/rescue openings. The 5-foot pathway shall be maintained through all doors/gates and past gas and

- electrical meters, storage of trash cans, etc. CFC Section 504.1. All parcels shall adjoin the public way. Govt. Code 66411.7. (e) 2, CFC Section 504.1.1
2. For lots with a fronting existing building previously constructed across the entire width of the lot, new residential buildings proposed at the rear shall have an access passageway (e.g., tradesman walkway) with a minimum 5-foot clear width and minimum 80-inch clear height from the public way to the new residential building. The 5-foot passageway shall be maintained through all doors/gates and past gas and electrical meters, storage of trash cans, etc. CFC 504.1.1
  3. A Fire Department access passageway that is not open to the sky shall have one hour fire-resistance-rated construction and shall be equipped with fire sprinkler protection that complies with CFC Section 903.3.
  4. The address identification of the rear building shall be legible, with minimum 4-inch-tall letters and placed in a location that is visible from the street or road fronting the property. CFC Section 505
  5. Illumination of not less than one foot-candle (11 lux) at the walking surface shall be provided along the entire access, from the rear building to the public way. CFC Section 1008
  6. The access passageway shall have a securely attached slip-resistant floor surface. CFC Section 1003.4
  7. Any slope along the access passageway shall not exceed 1 unit vertical in 12 units horizontal. CFC Section 1012.2, CFC Section 504.1
  8. Access passageways shall accommodate at least a 22-foot straight/extension ladder that can reach all emergency escape and rescue openings and the roof of the building. Buildings taller than 33 feet will require access for a 28-foot extension ladder. CFC Section 504.1
  9. Fire Department access shall not cross a neighboring lot line. Access shall be from the public way to the rear building. Ingress and egress to the public way shall be established prior to review by Fire. CFC Section 504.1
  10. Fire apparatus access roads shall be within 150 feet of all portions of all exterior walls on the first story of buildings. If the distance exceeds 150 feet, the building will be required to have a sprinkler system, and the installation of a horizontal standpipe may be required. CFC Section 503.1.1 & CFC Appendix D, CFC Section 503
  11. Projections, such as cornices, eave overhangs, exterior balconies and similar projections going beyond the exterior wall shall not extend closer to the proposed property line used to determine the fire separation distance than as shown in CBC Table 705.2. CBC Section 705.2
  12. The fire resistance rating of exterior walls of Type V-B construction shall be 1-hour rated. This fire resistance rating shall not be required where the fire separation distance is five feet or greater. Where equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system in accordance with CBC Section 903.3, the fire-resistance rating shall not be required where the fire separation distance is 3 feet or greater. CBC Section 705.5. and CBC Table 705.5

- 13. The maximum area of unprotected and protected openings permitted in an exterior wall in any story of a building shall not exceed the percentages specified in CBC Table 705.8 based on the fire separation distance of each individual story. CBC Section 705.8.1
- 14. A minimum size safe dispersal area shall be provided when occupants are required to exit through a building to access the public way. The provisions for the safe dispersal area shall be in accordance with CBC Section 1028.5. This dispersal area may be modified by DBI Information Sheet EG-02.
- 15. Light and ventilation shall be provided to all habitable rooms per SFBC 1204 and 1202.

Where a hardship to mitigate code noncompliance is demonstrated, the applicant may propose reasonable equivalency for consideration and approval on a discretionary basis under DBI Administrative Bulletin AB-005.



4/23/24

Ken Cofflin  
Fire Marshal  
San Francisco Fire Department

Date



4/10/24

Patrick O'Riordan, C.B.O.  
Director  
Department of Building Inspection

Date

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